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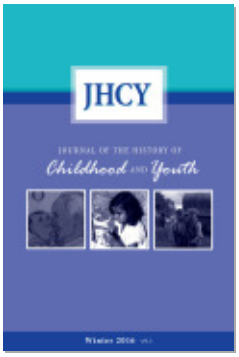

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ENTANGLED UTOPIAS: THE NAZI MOBILIZATION OF ETHNIC GERMAN YOUTHS IN THE BATSCHKA, 1930S-1944

> After the Germans came in and they saw how in need for German everything, from the dictionary to German books [we were], they were just amazed! Because, how should I put it? . . . We sort of worshipped the Germans . . . because they brought everything down there to us, and it was free. And we just ate that all up, the knowledge that we got from that. . . . We were infatuated . . . or fascinated, with the German technology. . . . We thought the world at that time of Germany.[1]
>
> – Friedrich Fischer

Born in 1928 to a German-speaking, Catholic merchant family of four, Friedrich Fischer, like so many of his generation, experienced a turbulent youth. Engulfed within the larger geopolitical and social upheavals of his time, Friedrich experienced the rise of the Third Reich, the proliferation of National Socialism within his community, the large-scale mobilization of his town's men into Germany's military forces, his own enlistment into the local *Hitler-Jugend*, and his hometown's ultimate obliteration through multiple waves of war and occupation. Friedrich, however, was not born and raised in Germany; rather, he had spent the first sixteen years of his life in the Batschka/Bačka/Bácska, a historically contested southeastern European territory now located in southern Hungary and the Vojvodina.[2]

Friedrich's experiences, though striking, were not unique, even within this fairly understudied southeastern European context. Indeed, Friedrich was only one of over 173,000 ethnic Germans within the Batschka who, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, witnessed not merely the ravages of war, but also the

tangible incursion of National Socialism into their communities' lives.[3] This article will first contextualize the experiences of ethnic German youths in the Batschka during World War II, presenting a brief historic background on the region and its ethnic German communities. Using *Volksgeschichten* (ethnographic national histories) and similar German studies on the region, the article will then outline the manners in which the Batschka became, even from the 1930s onwards, a target for "utopian" National Socialist planning.[4] Focusing primarily on the Nazi mobilization of youths, the article will then illustrate how German youths—both from within and outside of the *Reich*—became envisioned as a cornerstone to Nazi Germany's ambitions in eastern Europe. These National Socialist projections "from above," however, were not self-contained. Rather, as memoirs and oral history interviews with these former German youths themselves indicate, Nazi schemes ultimately gave rise to multiple and mutually constitutive utopian imaginations, as youths mobilized and educated within National Socialist projects developed and acted on their own conceptualizations of "Germanness" and "German" space.

THE BATSCHKA: A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

As a region that experienced centuries of settlement by various ethnic groups and complex boundary changes between national, state, and imperial projects, the Batschka found itself for centuries at the crossroads between competing spatial imaginations and claims. Part of the Kingdom of Hungary from the Middle Ages onwards, the territory experienced Ottoman administration between 1526 and 1699. Becoming a Habsburg territory once again thereafter, the Batschka became the focus of intensive "repopulation" policies during the eighteenth century, which encouraged and financed German-speaking Christians (predominantly Catholics) to settle in the region. These so-called *Donauschwaben* thus joined a plethora of other preexisting and newly arrived minorities, including Hungarians, Serbs, Romanians, Ruthenians, Bunjevci, Šokci, Roma, Jews, French, Spaniards, and Italians.[5] With the collapse of the Habsburg Empire after the First World War, the Batschka was divided. Except for a small sliver in the north (which remained in Hungary), most of the Batschka now belonged to the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. While it is difficult to obtain exact population statistics, according to the Yugoslav census of 1931, some 21.64 percent of the Batschka's population (out of a total population of 784,896) was German, 34.24 percent was Hungarian, and 24.05 percent was "Serb."[6]

Following the Axis' invasion and division of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the Batschka once again came entirely under the purview of the (Axis-allied) Kingdom of Hungary. In October 1944, with the deterioration of the Axis's

defenses in southeastern Europe, this situation altered once again: facing the Red Army's advance, approximately half of the local ethnic German population fled westward. Those who did not escape experienced collective retribution when Marshal Tito, the later Yugoslav leader, and his Partisans took over the Batschka.[7]

Due to its strategic location between empires, nations, and states; its "uncertain" multiethnic and fluctuant borderland nature; and its wealth in agricultural and human resources, the Batschka was a site of intense geopolitical struggle during the early twentieth century. Even during the interwar period, various state and national projects targeted the populations therein in order to win for themselves (usually through the "awakening" of an "ethnic" or "national" "consciousness") the loyalties of these frequently multiethnic, multilingual people.[8] One of the main targets of these activities, as we shall see, was youth; one of these projects' main driving agents was Germany.

CONCEPTUALIZING UTOPIA: REICH IMAGINATIONS OF THE BATSCHKA AND ITS PEOPLE

The history of Germany—even from a youth movement perspective—is at least partially also a history of imperialism, which manifested itself in nationalized utopian conceptualizations of space.[9] Especially during the period of the Third Reich, "national space" became subject to "utopian projection," as Nazism's "unique and radical character was rhetorically tied to the way in which it operated in and through space."[10] Space became crucial to the National Socialist project, partially because it provided boundaries within which its visions of restructuring society and recasting the "German man" could seemingly be achieved, partially also because it would supply the ideological, physical, and "human" material necessary for the movement's continuation. Only by inscribing themselves into a specific location could the Third Reich's aspirations—as any modern utopian project—aim at establishing "a world transformed";[11] space ultimately lent a framework which not merely underpinned social and/or political desires, but helped create them in the first place.[12]

One space that became both the target and the inspiration for the Third Reich's utopian ambitions was the Batschka. Following the humiliating Treaty of Versailles, German policymakers and academics became increasingly fascinated by ethnic Germans in regions like the Batschka that might prove beneficial to Germany. Research institutions dedicated to *Ostforschung* (the "study of the East") and *Kulturraumforschung* (the "study of cultural space") thus mushroomed across Germany. The *Stiftung für deutsche Volks- und Kulturbodenforschung* in Leipzig, the *Institut für Osteuropäische Wirtschaft* in

Königsberg, and the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (DAI) in Stuttgart were thus founded and/or expanded, financed, and operated by the German government during the early interwar period, and—as such—experienced a full-blown *Gleichschaltung* (National Socialist "coordination") by the late 1930s.[13]

The Batschka, too, became the focus of studies aimed at the region's geographic and economic conditions, population structures, and—increasingly—"racial" composition. One of the earliest, pre-Nazi German studies on the Batschka specifically was published by Hermann Rüdiger, a specialist on "*Auslandsdeutsche*" (ethnic Germans outside of Germany) and a later director of the DAI.[14] Published in 1931, Rüdiger's study on the "*Donauschwaben* of the South-Slavic Batschka" shows few indications of fantastical or National Socialist ambitions in the region. As within similar pre-*Gleichschaltung* studies and *Volksgeschichten* on southeastern Europe, Rüdiger focuses, rather, on an empirical illustration of geographical, demographic, and economic conditions within the region, and not (yet) on any utopian ideals on the (re-)construction of a supposed German "*Urheimat*" (original homeland). In Rüdiger's study, the German minority is considered in its geographic, ethnographic, and demographic context. However, amidst maps, tables, and various descriptions, one is hard-pressed to find "utopian" aspirations; Rüdiger merely mentions how the future development of these German communities, so far removed from the "original home" and now no longer under Habsburg rule, seems unclear.[15]

However, Rüdiger's volume stands in stark contrast to German studies published on the Batschka following Hitler's *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power). Henceforth imbued openly with the aims and tenets of National Socialism, post-*Gleichschaltung* studies highlight how conceptualizations of the spatial became increasingly intertwined with utopian National Socialist imaginations and projects. In 1943, for instance, the (by now indirectly SS-controlled[16]) DAI published a volume on the "Germandom" of the portions of the Batschka that had remained in Hungary after World War I. According to the introduction, the volume was compiled by Erich Walz, a researcher who had fallen on the eastern front in August 1941 "for *Führer, Volk*, and *Reich*."[17] Although, like Rüdiger, Walz focuses on empirical data, including population statistics and geographic and economic data, his study exists in a field of tension between two contradictory "utopic" imaginations of the ethnic Germans in the Batschka. Walz frames the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* as the most German of the German. As he writes, "For over half a century, a repetitively increasing and decreasing stream of the best German blood flowed into the wide territories of the European East and Southeast." While direct ties between the "motherland" and its "daughter settlements" had "loosened," the ethnic Germans in this territory nevertheless

remained the greatest "enthusiasts" of their German heritage. Confronted on a daily basis with "foreign *Völker*," these Germans had always considered their "*Volkstum*" (racialized national identity) as "the highest good and the content of their entire longing." Furthermore, the Germans in the Batschka were where the "German *Bauerntum* [agricultural folk] had reached a zenith," a standard to be adopted once again by his countrymen within Germany.[18]

Walz thus paints a utopic image of the Batschka as inhabited by a "pure" bucolic German "*Volk*," a standard to be aspired to by all Germans within the *Reich*. However, Walz also envisions problems within this space, problems which apparently could only be solved through the tenets and programs of National Socialism. Walz highlights certain "cancers" that had damaged the territory's German "human material" ("*Menschenmaterial*"). One of these included abortion—supposedly introduced by a Jewish doctor in 1884—which had caused a rapid decline in the local German birth rates over the past decades, especially in comparison to other local minorities. Jews had therefore "endangered" the future of the Batschka's German population in a "biological" sense; these activities, moreover, were supported by the Magyars, who—with their restrictive Magyarization policies in education, bureaucracy, and census-taking—had for centuries also attempted to "break into" an already "weakened zone of the German *Volkskörper.*" As Walz exclaims, however, the recent acquisition of the Batschka by Axis troops would finally enable the local Germans to lift the "yoke" of Jewish and Hungarian "oppression." Largely due to Germany's free access into the region, the Batschka's "powerful reconstruction" in "*völkisch*, biological, and economic terms" could now seemingly commence.[19]

MULTIPLYING UTOPIA: THE SUBJECTIVITY OF YOUTH AND THE EMERGENCE OF MUTUALLY CONSTITUTIVE UTOPIAS

One of the key agents of the Batschka's "reconstruction" would be youth. Youth, it seemed, would be not only incredibly amenable, but also exceptionally important to Nazi programs in the region. Youths were deemed the most easily excitable and mobilizable segments of society (both within the *Reich* and abroad).[20] Yet, due to their developmental liminality, they also occupied a paradoxical position.[21] As was so frequently emphasized by National Socialists, youths provided a direct nexus to the future; whoever "won" youth for themselves would gain control of the future.[22] However—and precisely because of their critical, future-oriented position—youths were also exceedingly vulnerable, as they were targeted by competing actors and claims. As Walz suggests in his study, for instance, what particularly "endangered" the German population in the Batschka was the "miseducation" of children and youths (through

Magyarization), or the lack of a "future generation" to begin with (through abortion). For utopian projects—in their nature orientated towards the future—the "harnessing" of the forthcoming generations further gained an urgency. As a result, youths became a primary focus for the Third Reich's ambitions within the Batschka. [23]

The *Reich*'s inclusion of youths in their plans of "reconstructing" the Batschka according to "*völkisch*, biological, and economic terms" contained two distinct and interconnected components: the large-scale "import" of *reichsdeutsche* youths into the Batschka, and the mass mobilization of *Donauschwaben* youths into National Socialist formations.[24] Little research has been conducted on the Hitler Youth and similar formations in southeastern Europe. Furthermore, the topic's primary source base remains fragmentary due to large-scale archival destruction and displacement both in Germany and in southeastern Europe around the end of World War II.[25] However, as secondary literature has shown, the *Hitler-Jugend* was indeed cast as crucial to Germany's "Eastern policy" from the 1920s.[26] Working with the *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland* ("Association for Germans Abroad," VDA), Ribbentrop's Foreign Office, and Rosenberg's Ministry for Occupied Eastern Territories, the Hitler Youth and its subsidiaries (like the female *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, BDM) began crafting increasingly elaborate schemes to bring *reichsdeutsche* youths into Europe's contested borderlands during the 1930s. The *Landdienst*, established in 1934, thus brought hundreds of thousands of youths from Germany into short-term agricultural and domestic service in ethnic German homes and farms across Europe. Increasingly, as *Reich* interests in central, eastern, and southeastern Europe flourished, these were no longer only sent to more "traditional" German irredenta; rather, girls and boys were now also sent by the hundreds to more remote borderlands, like Bessarabia, Bukovina, the Baltic states, or Volhynia.[27]

These youths were not merely to support ethnic Germans as laborers, however crucial this may have become as Germany relied more heavily on foreign goods and manpower over the course of the war.[28] Rather, their function was also ideological. The *reichsdeutsche* youths' tools in their "foreign service" thus included not merely the "sword and plow," but also the dictionary, songbook, and medical pamphlet. [29] In their interactions with ethnic Germans abroad, *reichsdeutsche* youths were to act as instructors, teaching the *Volksdeutsche* German language, literature, and grammar; Nazi-specific culture; and "German" standards of nutrition and hygiene.[30] The goal of these activities became no less than an "*Umvolkung*" of ethnic German populations across Europe: ethnic Germans were to become not only "racially pure," but also ardent followers of "Germanic" culture and Nazi thought.[31]

Figure 1: Hitler Youths from Germany Salute the Nazi German and Hungarian Flags (Bačko Novo Selo, Early 1940s). Source: Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia).

The *Reich*, however, relied not merely on labor programs like the *Landdienst*; even from the early 1930s, *Hitler-Jugend* formations from Germany engaged in additional "cultural" programs. According to Baldur von Schirach, Hitler Youth chief from 1933 to 1940, one of the main pillars of the Hitler Youth's "*Auslandsarbeit*" (foreign work) would include "field trips," "study trips," and exchange programs with youth groups from abroad. For instance, by 1934, the *Mittelstelle Deutscher Jugend in Europa* ("Office for German Youth in Europe") had already brought Hitler Youth troops into Hungary and Hungarian youths into Germany.[32] According to Schirach, *reichsdeutsche* youths were to seek contact with ethnic Germans abroad and engage them in folk song, theater, dance, and similar cultural productions to create a "connection to the new Germany." The aim of these initiatives, for Schirach, was "that every Hitler Youth and every BDM-girl, regardless of their location in the world, will create a large camaraderie [*Kameradschaft*], and that they will—despite spatial separation—march in one direction and live and act within the same spirit."[33]

The channeling of *reichsdeutsche* children and youths into regions like the Batschka, however, occurred not only through carefully crafted youth exchanges, but also through a combination of war-related necessities with the "emissarial" function of youth. The *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV), the *Reich*-coordinated temporary removal from October 1940 onwards of some five million urban children into safety in the countryside, thus formed a considerable arena for interactions between *Reichsdeutsche* and *Volksdeutsche*.[34] According to some estimates,

approximately eight thousand KLV children and youths were sent from the *Reich* to the Batschka and the "*Schwäbische Türkei*" (comprising Hungary's Tolna, Baranya, and Somogy counties) alone during the early 1940s.[35] These youths—who most prominently heralded from places like Westphalia in 1942, Hamburg in 1943, and Vienna in 1944, but also came from places like Transylvania and the Carpathians—generally arrived in the Batschka in groups, organized by school class and/or Hitler Youth troop.[36] They were then hosted by local ethnic German families for several weeks, families who were generally members of the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn* (the Hungarian ethnic German umbrella organization), and who received remuneration for their KLV-incurred expenses.[37] Clad in full Hitler Youth uniform, these youths would "strengthen" these families' "German consciousness." These families, in turn, were to help secure the "life and future of the entire German *Volk*" in their service.[38] In their direct involvement with local agricultural production, their folkloric events targeted at youths, and pompous public marches through village streets, the KLV youths became a crucial component of *Reich* projects within the region, which—as we shall see—indeed impressed the Batschka's German youths.[39]

In their "exchange programs" with ethnic German youths in the Batschka, however, the *Reich* also depended heavily, of course, on the *Donauschwaben*'s participation. Indeed, even during the mid-1930s—when the first *reichsdeutsche* youths and youth instructors arrived in the Batschka—the *Reich*'s formations did not enter a cultural or organizational vacuum.[40] Rather, they relied on the German-language cultural organizations, youth projects, schools, and press that had developed from the 1920s onwards within the *Donauschwaben* communities in an attempt to "preserve" local German-speaking culture and to create a more unified basis for minority rights claims in their new, post-Habsburg states.[41] Organizations like the VDA, the VoMi (*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*), and the German *Reichsjugendführung* (the *Reich*'s head youth office) thus worked in conjunction with local organizations, like the pre-1941 *Schwäbisch-Deutscher Kulturbund* (Yugoslavia's "Swabian-German Cultural Union") and the post-1941 *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn* ("*Volk*'s Union of the Germans in Hungary"), to organize the local German-speaking youth in (increasingly *Nazified*) youth organizations. Local German youth groups, which had become a standard component of most towns' and villages' *Kulturbund* chapters by the mid-1930s, thus increasingly interacted with *Reich* projects, became "educated" by *Reich* sports instructors and "*Wanderlehrer*" ("traveling teachers") who shared *Reich* exercises, films, and cultural products with their ethnic German charges, and even began participating in *Reich*-financed trips to Germany, such as on occasion of the 1936 Berlin Olympics.[42]

Especially following the *Kulturbund*'s takeover by pro-*Reich* "*Erneuerer*" ("renewers") in late 1938 and early 1939, the *Reich*'s influence over local youth projects became seemingly unbridled.[43] The Batschka's *Donauschwaben* youths were henceforth enlisted in youth programs structured around the Hitler Youth's model. Becoming part of a centralized "*Jugendamt*" (the "Youth Office," informally the "*Deutsche Jugend*," or DJ), *Donauschwaben* youths assembled at weekly gatherings in uniform, participated in physical training, marched on public grounds, sang Nazi songs, learned about their own importance in "the *völkisch* renewal," and—ultimately—participated in Germany's war effort, as in their 1940 service in Yugoslavia's "relocation camps" for ethnic German "resettlers" from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dobrudja.[44] Particularly after Hungary's annexation of the Batschka in 1941, these youth efforts almost completely permeated the formal educational sphere. Preestablished German-language schools and teachers' training colleges, like the *Lehrerbildungsanstalt* in New Werbass/ Novi Vrbas/ Újverbász or the *Deutsche Bürgerschule* in Neusatz/ Novi Sad/ Újvidék, were thus appropriated by the (now *gleichgeschaltet*) *Volksbund*, so that any German-speaking parents interested in providing their children with a German-language education were forced to enlist in the *Volksbund*. Their children, in turn, became members of the local *Deutsche Jugend*.[45] At least according to the local Nazi press, the collaboration of *Reich* and *Donauschwaben* youth projects had borne a considerable fruit by the early 1940s: as a 1943 calendar for Hungary's *Deutsche Jugend* reports, for instance, up to ninety percent of the Batschka's ethnic German youths (22,000 individuals) had joined the "Hitler Youth" by then.[46] Depending on the source, furthermore, between 70 and 95 percent of the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* population as a whole had joined the pro-Nazi *Volksbund*.[47]

In the activities of, and interactions between, youths from the *Reich* and youths from the Batschka, utopian imaginations of space became a critical and sought-after component. The function of youths within these projects was emissarial, and the message to be conveyed was embedded within conceptualizations of German space. Youths sent from the *Reich* to the Batschka thus held a double role: initially, *reichsdeutsche* youths were dispatched abroad in *Hitler-Jugend*, *Kinderlandverschickung*, and similar operations to inform their ethnic German peers about the *Reich*, teach them the "true" values and meanings of "Germandom," imbue them with National Socialism, and mobilize these first into local Nazi youth groups and ultimately into Germany's war effort. However, upon their return to the *Reich*, these youths' "emissarial" role continued. Now filled with first-hand experiences of the "original" German "blood" that environments like the Batschka supposedly harbored, and with their

Figure 2: *Deutsche Jugend* Girls Studying (Novi Sad, Early 1940s). Source: Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia).

own impressions of a comparatively utopian setting, free from bombardment, where food remained plentiful throughout the war, these youths returned to the *Reich* with their own utopian conceptualizations on the Batschka and *Reich* efforts therein. The Batschka's German youths, once involved in these youth programs, served a similar function: first educated by their *reichsdeutsche* peers on Germany, they were then expected to relay this message to their greater *Donauschwaben* communities, acting as "educators" on the "glories" of the *Reich* and a *Reich*-"German" identity. As one 1941 article within Hungary's Nazi youth paper, the *Jungkamerad*, states, for instance:

> *Deutsche Jugend!* Maybe your parents are still ambivalent. . . . However, it is your task to also fight for your parents. Through you, they must become Germans. Maybe it won't occur rapidly, maybe they also won't have the necessary dedication; however, they will march, and they even will be glad when you are kilometers ahead of them.[48]

Youths embedded within these projects thus became both the objects and the agents of an increasingly diversified "utopia": *reichsdeutsche* youths peddled images both of a "utopian" *Reich* and of a "utopian" Batschka, while Batschka youths became the messengers of a utopian imagination of the *Reich* and of a greater "German" identity.

According to Karl Mannheim, utopias never occur in a single form or in isolation; rather, as they originate in "social life," utopias concurrently arise

in multiple (and sometimes antagonistic) forms, coming into existence and, ultimately, maintaining each other mutually.[49] As Luisa Passerini has further claimed, utopias reside in subjectivity. Subjectivity is what conceives of and acts upon utopias; it bridges the gap between reality and phantasy, memory and imagination, structure and agent, and the utopian ideal and the utopian practice.[50] Utopias were therefore not merely multifarious and occasionally conflicting when conceived "from above"; rather, individuals targeted by, and involved with, utopian projects "from below" also developed their own utopian conceptions, making the specific fragmentations of the "utopian" almost infinitesimal.

Not many extant sources give direct insight into the subjective experience of *reichsdeutsche* children and youths in the Batschka during the war. However, KLV children occasionally remained in contact with their former hosts after the war, engaging in epistolary exchanges with them, attending cultural events of *Donauschwaben* organizations in Germany and Austria, and publishing memoirs in *Donauschwaben* newsletters. These memoirs offer fascinating insights into how—even decades later—youths from Germany perceived the Batschka and its people. These recollections, of course, have been filtered through the passage of time, several decades of additional life experiences, a nostalgia for a long-passed childhood, and a genuine gratitude towards their former Batschka German hosts. Nevertheless, certain tentative conclusions can be drawn.

As the memoirs of former KLV children suggest, there was a disconnect between "macro" conceptualizations of the Batschka, as portrayed not merely in the *Volksgeschichten* of Rüdiger and Walz, for instance (which these youths, presumably, would not have had access to), but also with official, more politicized portrayals of the Batschka in the *reichsdeutsche* youth press of the time. As one VDA-sponsored youth publication, the 1939 *Jung Roland*, claimed, the Batschka had formed the "center of German life in Yugoslavia"; despite previous decades of Magyarization and their "falling to Yugoslavia," the Batschka Germans had succeeded in becoming "politically awakened" in the spirit of the *Reich* and the VDA.[51] Partially due to a lack of childhood political interest, persisting taboos surrounding Nazi activities within *Donauschwaben* communities, retrospective realizations of the Third Reich's horrors, and a genuine, continuous perception that their activities were not "political," such considerations are not reflected within the KLV memoirs.[52] Nevertheless, utopian conceptualizations of the Batschka are not merely present in these sources; they perhaps even supersede the imaginations of the original propagandistic materials.

Former KLV children's memoirs hence recount *reichsdeutsche* individuals' overwhelming admiration for the Batschka, creating an image of a halcyon, bountiful space that, even decades later, formed a "second home" for these youths.[53]

One man from Vienna, who stayed in the Batschka between October 1943 and May 1944, remembered how, upon his arrival, the Danube seemed "wider than a flowing sea." The local population greeted his KLV class in a friendly manner—people who, as he was surprised to find out, were called "*Donauschwaben*" and also spoke German, albeit "a bit differently than us."[54] Another woman from Hamburg, who visited the Batschka between April 1943 and October 1943, further described how her host family made preparations for Easter. This family not only repainted and cleaned their entire house, the women of the household even spent several days baking cakes, pies, and cookies. "And how they made these cakes!!" she wrote. "One pie was made with thirty eggs and more," apparently something that she had not seen or tasted in Hamburg for a long time.[55] Unfortunately, she could not take part in the Easter Sunday service, as she had to attend her weekly Sunday "*Flaggenappell*" ("salute to the flag") and sports events (both mandatory for *Hitler-Jugend*/BDM and KLV members on Sundays). However, she was deeply impressed by the folk costumes and Catholic customs surrounding her, which—for her—"were all new."[56]

In their memoirs, the former KLV youths focused on three main themes: their engagement with *Donauschwaben* customs, the local economy, and food. Almost every memoir thus illustrated the elaborate meals that their host families so "generously" and "lovingly" prepared for them; almost all mentioned cake.[57] Furthermore, most recalled their fascination with local customs, folk dress, and religious celebrations. Many also recounted how, "out of thanks" to their hosts, the *reichsdeutsche* groups organized cultural evenings in which they presented songs and dances typical for their own German regions.[58] Furthermore, these individuals recalled with triumph the "joy and sorrow" of their involvement with the Batschka's silk worm production. Despite being—as the archival record shows—a strictly regulated part of the war economy, the KLV children's accounts of their days gathering mulberry leaves to feed the silk worms, for instance, were framed by descriptions of songs and games, tangible (collective) economic gain, and bounteous meals.[59]

During their time in the Batschka, however, the KLV cohorts also interacted on a daily basis with local youths. These youths, too, developed their own "utopian" spatial imaginations, traceable in part through oral history.

As with the *reichsdeutsche* youths, it is apparent that the Batschka German youths were inundated with propaganda that taught them to see the *Reich* in utopian terms, as the utopian space of these youths' origins, "longing," and destiny. Youth literature directed at the *Donauschwaben* since at least the late 1930s had thus explicitly conveyed messages—supposedly from Hitler and Schirach personally—on the importance of these Germans abroad to the *Reich*,

Figure 3: *Batschka Deutsche Jugend "Wunschkonzert für das [WHW]"* (Concert for the *Winterhilfswerk*, a *Reich*-Driven 'Winter Charity'). Source: Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia).

and vice versa.[60] After 1941, when the Batschka's *Deutsche Jugend* was officially subsumed under Hungary's *Deutsche Jugend*,[61] such imagery continued. As one poem, entitled "*Deutschland*" and printed in the 1943 calendar for Hungarian *Deutsche Jugend* members, exclaims:

Deutschland, dir ferne
leuchten uns Sterne,
brennt uns die Sonne,
braust uns der Sturm.

Und unser Leben
Und unser Streben,
Deutschland, dir ferne,
gilt dir allzeit.

Du gibst uns Stärke
für unsere Werke,
Deutschland, dein Wille,
sei uns Gebot.[62]

The degree to which children and youths formed a receptive audience for such publications is debatable. Nevertheless, as oral history interviews with

German-speaking men and women who grew up in the Batschka during the 1930s and early 1940s indicate, such messages indeed formed part of their education. One woman, who had attended a *Volksbund*-organized German-language kindergarten during the early 1940s, for instance, was still able to remember such poems—recited, as below, for Hitler's birthday and similar occasions—decades later:

> *Vergissmeinnicht mit blauem Stern,*
> *Kommt her geeilt von nah' und fern.*
> *Vergesst es nicht, seid dankbar dran,*
> *Was Adolf Hitler euch getan.*[63]

All of these individuals, furthermore, recounted how the press, the cinema, and—above all—the radio conveyed messages from the *Reich*. Many were deeply impressed by these communications, especially as, in some cases, their parents and grandparents would gather around the radio to "follow Hitler's speeches."[64] However, what seemed to have made the largest impression on these children and youths—something very much in tune with the original goal of the youth exchange programs—were the personal interactions that occurred between *Reichsdeutsche* and *Volksdeutsche*.

All of the individuals interviewed had distinct memories of *Reichsdeutsche* in their communities. Frequently, these *Reichsdeutsche* were adults. Most of the *Donauschwaben*, for instance, had recollections of *reichsdeutsche* military men, especially *Waffen-SS* members, as they conducted recruitments and trainings within their villages during the early 1940s. Many of these *Reichsdeutsche*, however, had also come to the Batschka to work with youths directly. "*Wanderlehrer*" ("traveling teachers") thus came from the *Reich*—generally in a "fascinating" uniform with "awards" and "leather boots"—and gave lectures on "agriculture, natural sciences, and so on," but also "made propaganda for the Third Reich, for a willingness to fight for the Fatherland."[65] One man, who had been "active with the youth program" as a teenager, further recalled how every Sunday, when his local "Hitler Youth" troop met, "professors who were a little bit older and knew about German culture" gave lectures, distributed books from Germany, and informed these youngsters about the German-Russian front with an illustrated map. "Looking back," he explained, "I thought . . . that was just a wonderful thing . . . that they shared all this with us."[66]

Batschka youths who interacted with *Reichsdeutsche* felt excitement that the *Reich* was interested in them. As one man stated, "it was beautiful" that "we had a connection [with Germany]," and that "teachers and other people" would come from Germany to see them. However, as he explained, it was

particularly gratifying to interact with *reichsdeutsche* youths. His aunt "would have the [KLV] Hamburg boys spend the summer with her"; he "would go there a lot . . . and listen to them, talk to them" and ultimately "learn a little more German."[67] Another woman, whose family had hosted the (Hitler Youth–uniformed) leaders of her town's KLV groups in their living room, similarly exclaimed how thrilling it was to host the *Reichsdeutsche*: "When someone came from Germany! That was always something very special, one did . . . appreciate that very much."[68]

Partially due to their ostentatious public displays, these KLV cohorts indeed impressed the Batschka youths. Most *Donauschwaben* interviewed thus recalled how youth formations from the *Reich* marched through their villages' streets wearing "short black trousers and a brown shirt . . . and some kind of vertical thing over it."[69] Generally, these youths walked between the local *Kulturbund/Volksbund* headquarters, their classroom, and the sports fields; almost always, they "marched nicely," singing "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*" and making a huge "hullaballoo."[70] The *Donauschwaben* youths were mostly "enthusiastic" ("*begeistert*") about these presentations; indeed, even youths who were not allowed to participate in these activities (usually due to their families' rejection of Nazism) found it disappointing that they had to spend their Sundays in church and not on the sports field or at their local youth assembly.[71]

Besides these public spectacles, smaller personal interactions between youths were also crucial. Even youths who had not enrolled in their local *Deutsche Jugend* chapter and whose families had not enlisted in the *Volksbund* initiated friendships with the KLV youths. "They spoke a lot about Germany . . . which was something very new, interesting," one such man recounted. The KLV members found friends easily amongst the Batschka German youths; they then reported in all earnest how "Germany is cleanliness . . . Germany is punctuality and . . . especially also honesty, as in Germany, for instance, something like theft does not exist."[72] Largely through these interactions, "Germany" was adorned with utopian vestments; children and youths from the Batschka, in their exchanges with the *Reichsdeutsche*, ultimately truly believed that the Germans were "the competent . . . and the better ones . . . and the hard-working ones."[73] And, most crucially, it was seemingly through their direct interactions with the *Reichsdeutsche* and their projects that these youths could become part of the fable that was the "clean," "honest," "hard-working," "educated," "punctual," and "technologically advanced" *Reich.*

Interestingly, however, such utopian images of the *Reich* did not remain in youths' imaginations. Rather, projects were put in place to convince the *Donauschwaben* that such presentations were grounded in reality. One man,

who had joined his local Hitler Youth and who had attended various *Volksbund*-administered German-language schools, thus recalled how, in August 1944, he and approximately thirty other young *Donauschwaben* from the Batschka traveled to Weimar, Germany, for one month.[74] Becoming some of the first in their villages to experience the "motherland," they were housed in *Schloss Belvedere*, exchanged stories with local *reichsdeutsche Spielmannszug* musicians, studied classical German poetry, visited the "world's largest organ" in Erfurt, and tasted their first ever oranges, bananas, and chocolates. As he explained, "we . . . thought: *this* is what Germany is like. We were then supposed to come back as ambassadors with glowing eyes," reporting to everyone at home "how good things were in Germany." In retrospect, of course, while they "had everything" at this camp, this was not the average German experience during the war, and *Schloss Belvedere* "was all a façade." However, as he reflected, "We were very gullible, as we did not know Germany as such."[75]

MOBILIZING UTOPIA: THE AGENCY OF YOUTH IN THE REALIZATION OF UTOPIAN PROJECTS

Utopias, as we have seen, arise from a multiplicity of sources and on a variety of scales. One of their most fascinating and significant aspects, however, is their ability to evoke action. Indeed, within a utopia's very conceptualization there lies a drive for change, reconstruction, and transformation; without the realization of activity which has a fundamentally "transforming effect upon the existing historical-social order," "utopias" remain simple "wish-projections," and do not qualify as "utopias" *per se*.[76] Within the *Reich*-inspired youth projects to and from the Batschka, utopia also inspired activity. The fact that youths enthusiastically participated in Nazi youth meetings, trainings, and exchanges is one indication of this (although, to a degree, the "utopian" ideal here also arose from praxis within a "utopian program," which these youths may have joined for other reasons, including the desire to engage in what one's friends did, an attraction to the youth groups' uniforms and activities, or their parents placing them into these programs). However, the Batschka's ethnic German youths acted upon utopian imaginations of the *Reich*, and their own potential role in its construction, in two other significant ways: an engagement in (and sometimes a spurring of) local community conflicts between pro-*Reich Donauschwaben* and anti-*Reich* or "non-German" entities, and voluntary enlistment into the German military forces.

Before delving further into an illustration of these activities, it is necessary to posit several caveats. The issue of action raises the question of agency, a particularly thorny issue in relation to children and youths who have traditionally

been conceptualized as more deeply intertwined with, and influenced by, their families, their peers, and institutions such as schools or the church.[77] Furthermore, topics such as the engagement of *Donauschwaben* in Nazi projects have remained, besides a few notable exceptions, understudied and "taboo."[78] Finally, the archival record on such issues is sparse.[79] The following passages hence represent a first exploration of newly discovered sources that illustrate how ethnic German youths within the Batschka acted upon, and helped promulgate within their own communities, novel visions of the *Reich* and related conceptualizations of "Germanness."

One of the main avenues for youth activity in reaction to utopian imaginations of the *Reich* became the conflicts that brewed more generally in the Batschka between ethnic Germans and their "non-German" neighbors (whereby the definitions of "German" and "non-German," as we shall see, were in themselves contested). Conflicts arose, for instance, when the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* youths became suddenly incorporated into the youth programs, schools, and institutions of the Hungarian state in 1941. The Hungarian authorities, for example, experienced major frustrations when the Batschka's German youths—who had already been mobilized within the seemingly more radical Yugoslav *Deutsche Jugend*—refused to serve in the Hungarian state youth formation, the *levente*, even though this was required of them as new Hungarian citizens.[80] Such rebellion appears repeatedly in the archives. Letters from the VDU thus frequently reminded local *Volksbund* branches that four weekly hours of *levente* service were required from the local German youth, in which they were to wear the *levente* uniform's hat.[81] Even these hats were controversial. One 1943 account by Vajska/Wajska/Vajszka's *Volksbund*, for instance, reports how one ethnic German boy removed his *levente* hat immediately after being released from his *levente* service one afternoon. The *levente* "sergeant" ("*zászlós*"), apparently so enraged by this continuous sign of "German" disobedience, ordered all of the German-speaking boys to return and do push-ups. During these exercises, the sergeant beat them and shouted insults at them in Hungarian: "*Piszkos svábok; vagy magyarok lesztek, vagy gané.*"[82]

Such episodes also occurred in schools. Another report from Vajszka thus recounts how pandemonium erupted in one *Volksdeutsche* classroom in 1943 when the teacher (a Hungarian woman) attempted to conduct prayers in Hungarian. When the pupils refused (either out of disobedience or lacking Hungarian language skills), the teacher scolded the children, claiming that "they must pray in Hungarian, because they eat Hungarian bread." Enraged, the pupils replied that the bread they eat is not Hungarian, as it was made by their parents. In response, the teacher shouted that she hoped that God would

Figure 4: A Child Attends a Parade in Novi Sad (Early 1940s). Source: Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia).

grant Germany's defeat, and that the Russians would come and slaughter all of the Germans.[83]

Youths were not only the targets and witnesses of such violent episodes, provoked by their own "disobedience." They also engaged in violence to defend their own "Germanness" and status within organizations like the *Deutsche Jugend*. Such activities, as oral histories indicate, were also directed against fellow *Donauschwaben* who had seemingly not become "German" enough, as they had refused to enlist in pro-*Reich* projects (such as the *Volksbund* or the German labor and military formations). One *Donauschwab*, Georg, who as a teenager had not joined his local *Deutsche Jugend* and attended a Hungarian Piarist[84] boarding school instead, recounted, for instance, how one female DJ member in his neighborhood smashed her mother's windows, as her mother refused to participate in the *Volksbund*. This fate closely resembled that of his own family, as—due to his family's non-involvement with local Nazi projects—*Volksbund* members (frequently youths) continuously destroyed their house's windows, and smeared graffiti onto their house's façade—graffiti which contained "these expressions. Jew, or traitor."[85]

In Georg's opinion, youths in particular were "enthusiastic" about the *Reich* and its promises; youths were sometimes so effectively "taken in by propaganda" that they could simply "not understand that somebody could be against [the *Reich*]." Whenever he came home from his boarding school for the holidays, for instance, his former *Donauschwaben* classmates would already be waiting for him at the train station. They would then rip off his school cap, throw it in the mud, and step on it. They taunted him by asking, "Why don't you take a different, German cap, why do you have to wear a Hungarian cap?" "Such conflicts were common," he stated. Occasionally, these became so intense that some of his closest friends were actually *reichsdeutsche* KLV children, as they did not care which faction he belonged to, and because they could not understand why one "German" community would conduct such heavy internal battles.

Such "agitations," however, expressed themselves not merely in skirmishes within *Donauschwaben* communities; rather, as Georg explained, in retrospect he found it astonishing how many young men "went voluntarily . . . to fight for an ideology that they could not really understand . . . that the German . . . is . . . a *Volk* that must have the upper hand, and we must all participate in that."[86] "Participation," even in the case of pre–eighteen-year-olds, sometimes meant service within the German armed forces, especially in the *Waffen-SS*.

The history of German military recruitment within the Batschka is contentious partially because the archival record is incomplete and partially because it is almost impossible to determine how much enlistment into the

Figure 5: *Deutsche Jugend* Formation Marching through a Batschka Town (Early 1940s). Source: Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Serbia).

German military forces was driven by voluntary enthusiasm, violent coercion, social pressure, or any combination of such factors. Nevertheless, the *Reich*'s mobilization of the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* was intensive during the early 1940s. Even before the first official deals were struck between the *Reich* and the Hungarian state over the recruitment of Hungary's ethnic Germans, the Batschka's Germans enlisted by the hundreds in "voluntary recruitment drives." During the spring of 1941, for instance, dozens of Batschka German teenagers—discontented with the prospect of future Hungarian military service—illegally crossed the borders into the neighboring Banat and Croatia to enlist into the German military instead, an act which made them temporarily citizenshipless, as they thereby revoked their Hungarian citizenship. During the summer of 1941, when the *Waffen-SS* began conducting more public, albeit

explicitly "voluntary," recruitment drives, several hundred more youths joined. At least according to *Reich* statistics, by October 1941, the Batschka had supplied soldiers more "enthusiastically" than any other Hungarian region—while only 125 *Volksdeutsche* from prewar Hungary served in the *Wehrmacht* at that point, approximately 1,500 individuals from the Batschka had enlisted. Another 2,000 ethnic Germans from the Batschka served in the SS.[87]

Following diplomatic agreements between Hungary and the *Reich* between 1942 and 1944, three successive "waves" of SS recruitment in the Batschka ensued, each of which—as arises from non-*Donauschwaben* and *Donauschwaben* sources alike—became less "voluntary."[88] The numbers recruited were immense: in 1942 alone, some 12,868 Batschka Germans enlisted in the German military, including the *SS-Freiwilligen-Gebirgs-Division "Prinz Eugen"* (the "SS Voluntary Mountain Division 'Prinz Eugen'").[89] According to *Volksbund* statistics, by 1943, approximately twenty thousand Batschka Germans had joined the SS alone.[90]

Youths, as arises from the contemporaneous press, formed a considerable (or considerably publicized) component of these forces. The *Volksbund*'s 1943 *Volksdeutsche Kalender* thus includes portraits of smiling teenagers in full SS uniform. According to the captions, this was "the new face of our youth; a young high schooler [who] has traded the book for the weapon."[91] Another *Volksbund* publication similarly enthusiastically reported in March 1944 of a local Hitler Youth cohorts' first military "storm." According to the author, it brought much "joy" to see how "children," who were still "sitting on the school bench" when they joined the military, had now, as trained nineteen-year-olds, "become men" that "rattle [with their machine guns] side by side" on the front.[92] Such service, however, also brought death, which, in these publications, assumes the position of heroic sacrifice. The 1943 *Volksdeutsche Kalender* thus replicates the photograph of an SS-uniformed youngster who, according to the caption, "gave . . . his young life for *Führer, Volk,* and *Fatherland*."[93] Between 1941 and 1944, the Batschka's German press further regularly distributed the death announcements of fallen SS members. Some of these soldiers, too, had "died the death of a hero" in their teens, sometimes as young as seventeen.[94]

The degree to which youths' enlistment into organizations like the *Waffen-SS* was voluntary and truly "inspired" on the individual level by utopian imaginations of the *Reich* is debatable. Nevertheless, some such agency on the part of these youths does appear in the archival record. Letters sent in December 1943 and February 1944 by the *Volksgruppenführer* ("*Volk* group leader") of neighboring Croatia on the behalf of several DJ members-turned SS men illustrates this point strikingly. According to these letters, addressed to the *Reich*'s SS leadership, four *Donauschwaben* youths, born between 1922 and 1925, had approached

him due to frustrations with their SS service. Apparently, they had volunteered for the SS straight from the *Deutsche Jugend* in September 1942. After several months of training, they were stationed at the Mauthausen concentration camp. However, as previous and (as they hoped) future youth leaders, it was their "utmost desire" to fight on the front, preferably with the SS *Gebirgsdivisionen*. As the *Volksgruppenführer* concludes, he hoped sincerely that "this justified and notable wish" would be "granted," and that these young men would soon be sent to the front.[95]

CONCLUSION

In August and September 1944, Romania and Bulgaria declared war on their previous Axis allies, granting Soviet and Partisan forces almost immediate access to the Batschka. Panicked by the Red Army's advance, the Batschka's *Volksdeutsche* leaders, *Reich* SS authorities, and the Hungarian government drafted evacuation plans for the Batschka's ethnic Germans in October 1944. Approximately half of the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* stayed and thus experienced the region's take over by Soviet and Partisan forces and the ensuing plundering, killings, and collective arrests. Up to one hundred eighty thousand of Yugoslavia's ethnic Germans were locked into internment camps over the following months, where some fifty thousand died; an estimated twelve thousand more were shipped into forced labor in the Soviet Union.[96] The half that fled in October 1944 often spent months traveling, by foot and horse-drawn wagon, across war-torn Europe towards the land that they had, for so many years, only been able to imagine. Individuals who then arrived in Germany in late 1944 or early 1945 experienced Germany as it really was: "bombed out," driven to disaster through a dangerous fanaticism, and largely unprepared for the hundreds of thousands of ethnic German refugees now streaming in from places like the Batschka.[97] Utopian ideas—constructed, shaped, and maintained through an interplay with other mutually constitutive utopian visions—hence crumbled fairly quickly as historical, geopolitical, and social realities came crashing down on all that had once been targeted, touched, and "fascinated" by the *Reich*.

Utopias exist in many forms and arise within entangled webs of interactions between individual and collective imaginations, "from above" and "from below" utopian projections, differing social and geographic contexts, wish and reality, and idea and action. Utopias, furthermore, are, in all of these variations, intricately tied to the spatial, as it is the spatial that frames the aims and limitations of the utopian projection, and forms the context in which utopias are received, perceived, multiplied, and—ultimately—acted upon. These considerations also apply to the Batschka during the 1930s and 1940s. Nazi experts

and planners painted a (fluctuating and contradictory) image of the Batschka as a potential eugenic and agricultural utopia. Youths inspired by such ideals reported on their own experiences in the Batschka, a seeming utopian land of plenty; while *Donauschwaben* youths and children developed utopian visions of a Germany which they had never seen, but which they seemingly could become part of through an adherence to National Socialism.

Such utopias, however, inspired not merely thoughts, but also—in line with their very aims—actions. A direct line between vision and action cannot be drawn, as determining the precise actions, let alone the exact thoughts, of youths who engaged in Nazi activities is challenging at best. However, as oral histories and archival documents suggest, children and youths exposed to Hitler Youth–type projects indeed developed "utopian" ideals about the *Reich* and/or the Batschka, ideals which were not merely created within these youth formations, but outside of them, and ultimately helped lead to their popularity and "success" in the first place. Once inculcated with utopian visions of the *Reich*, and one's potential place in its construction, many of these youths then rose to "defend" their "Germanness," engaging not only in violence against their "insufficiently" "German" neighbors, teachers, family members, and peers, but even enlisting voluntarily into Germany's armed forces at a major potential personal loss (in citizenship, social ties, and life). Ultimately, this study thus not only sheds light on the complex interactional matrix of utopias in the Nazi German youth movement, but perhaps also opens broader questions on the role of childhood and youth within the context of colonialism, militarism, and war; the manners in which current memories and representations are shaped by the utopian visions and experiences of the past; and the power of fantastical utopian ideas in affecting not only personal subjectivities, but also in mobilizing very real courses of collective action.

NOTES

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1. Friedrich Fischer, interview, May 24, 2011. All names changed as per agreement signed between interviewer and interviewees. The interviews were conducted by the author as part of her ongoing research on the Batschka and the Western Banat's *Donauschwaben*. They were carried out either in English or in German, depending on the interviewees' preferences. All translations into English were done by the author.

2. Place names within this context are complex and reflect the shifting, multiethnic, multilingual composition of this borderland's populations and administrations. In this paper, names will be

given first as they appear in the source, and then with their Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, and/or German alternatives. The name used in the source will be given alone in all subsequent namings, though additional names and/or information may be added for clarification.

3. Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: s.n., 2005), 34.

4. For a more detailed discussion of the "*Volksgeschichte*" genre, see: Hans Schleier, "German historiography under National Socialism: dreams of a powerful nation-state and a German *Volkstum* come true," trans. Stefan Berger, in *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800*, ed. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, Kevin Passmore (London: Routledge, 1999), 176–188. It is difficult to accurately and concisely translate certain German terms, especially from the period of National Socialism, into English. In this text, translations are provided that most closely reflect these terms' meaning in the given context; occasionally, suggestions for further reading on these terms is also provided in the endnotes.

5. Karolyi Kocsis and Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi, "Chapter 5: The Hungarians of Vojvodina," in *Ethnic Geography of the Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin* (Budapest: Geographical Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 138–42; Stephan Olaf Schüller, *Für Glaube, Führer, Volk, Vater- oder Mutterland? Die Kämpfe um die deutsche Jugend im rumänischen Banat (1918–1944)* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 23–24; Carl Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten in Kroatien und der Vojvodina 1918–1941: Identitätsentwürfe und ethnopolitische Mobilisierung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 267–68; Akiko Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation des serbischen Banats 1941–1944 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), 25.

6. Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten,* 647. It is impossible to discern the actual ethnicity of individuals within these regions, as definitions thereof (even if based on mother tongue, as above) varied and became subject to a range of interpretations and responses. According to Bethke, for instance, the term "Serb" was problematic, as in this census, it included all Orthodox Serbo-Croatian speakers, which may have inflated these statistics somewhat.

7. Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 135–46, 249–86.

8. The Batschka was coveted even during the preceding centuries for its rich agricultural resources (as a "grain chamber of Europe"), its critical borderland position, and its potentials in (an "ethnically malleable" and mobilizable) manpower. Consider: Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten,* 20, 67–73.

9. Unfortunately, limitations in article length do not allow for a detailed explanation of Nazi Germany's "imperial" ambitions in eastern Europe and beyond. Critical recent literature includes: Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); John Connelly, "Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice," *Central European History* 32, no. 1 (1999): 1–33; David Furber, "Near as Far in the Colonies: The Nazi Occupation of Poland," *International History Review* 26, no. 3 (September 2004): 541–79; Willeke Sandler, "'Here Too Lies Our *Lebensraum*': Colonial Space as German Space," in *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, eds. Maiken Umbach and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 148–65; Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Luke Springman, "Exotic Attractions and Imperialist Fantasies in Weimar Youth Culture,"

in *Weimar Culture Revisited*, ed. John Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 99–116; Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

10. Maiken Umbach and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, "Introduction: Towards a Relational History of Spaces under National Socialism," in *Heimat, Region, and Empire*, 1–4.

11. Fredric Jameson, "Utopia as Method, or the Uses of the Future," in *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*, eds. Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 25; J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 15.

12. Ulrike Jureit, *Das Ordnen von Räumen. Territorium und Lebensraum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, HIS Verlag, 2012).

13. Ingo Haar, "German *Ostforschung* and Anti-Semitism," in *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing (1919–1945)*, eds. Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 2; Dietrich Beyrau, "Eastern Europe as a 'Sub-Germanic Space': Scholarship on Eastern Europe under National Socialism," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 692–93. For more on these specific institutions, see: Ingo Haar, "Leipziger Stiftung für deutsche Volks- und Kulturbodenforschung," in *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften: Personen—Institutionen—Forschungsprogramme—Stiftungen*, eds. Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2008), 374–83; Martin Seckendorf, "Deutsches Ausland-Institut," in *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften*, 140–49; on Königsberg, consider: diverse authors, *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften*, 98, 190, 328, 449, 457.

14. For more on Rüdiger, see *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften*, 146, 554.

15. Hermann Rüdiger, *Die Donauschwaben in der südslawischen Batschka*, Schriften des Deutschen Ausland-Instituts Stuttgart. A: Kulturhistorische Reihe, Band 28 (Stuttgart: Ausland und Heimat Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft, 1931), 7.

16. Katja Gesche, *Kultur als Instrument der Aussenpolitik totalitärer Staaten: Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut 1933–1945* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 82–86.

17. Erich Walz, *Das Deutschtum in den 1920 bei Ungarn gebliebenen Teilen von Batschka und Banat*, Schriften Deutsches Ausland-Institut (München: Rohrer, 1943), 5–6.

18. Walz, *Das Deutschtum*, 9–10.

19. Walz, *Das Deutschtum*, 9–10, 64, 72–77, 79, 92, 111.

20. Youth had been a focus of political and social movements in Germany since at least the turn of the twentieth century. With the ascent of the Nazis—a party self-fashioned as led "by and for youths"—the focus on youth burgeoned to novel proportions, both in the radicality of the ideology promulgated and in the numbers of youths mobilized into state-mandated projects. Consider: Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989); H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922–1945* (New York: Dorset Press, 1975); Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

21. Victor W. Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," *The Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society* (1964): 48–49. According to Turner,

youths find themselves in liminal, or "interstructural," circumstances wherein, situated between childhood and adulthood, they are perceived as "problematic" "transitional beings," devoid of status, role, and property, and in need of (and susceptible to) authoritative figures who familiarize them with the cultural codices and practices necessary for their reforging and reintegration into society.

22. Such sentiments are also prominent in southeastern European Nazi (youth) propaganda of the early 1940s, in which "our youth" is equated with "our future." Consider: "Unsere Jugend—Unsere Zukunft," photographic inlay, *Banater Volkskalender 1943: Kalender der Deutschen Volksgruppe im Banat und in Serbien für das Jahr 1943* (Grossbetschkerek: Banater Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt Bruno Kuhn und Komp. K.G.); *Bildkalender 1944 der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Ungarn* (Novi Sad: Druckerei- und Verlags-A.-G., 1943), week 48 sheet.

23. Luisa Passerini, *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (London: Equinox, 2007), 8.

24. "*Reichsdeutsche*" denotes Germans from within the *Reich*'s boundaries, while "*Volksdeutsche*" and "*Auslandsdeutsche*" denote ethnic Germans abroad. For more on these categories, see: Elizabeth Harvey, "Mobilisierung oder Erfassung? Studentischer Aktivismus und deutsche 'Volkstumsarbeit' in Jugoslawien und Rumänien 1933–1941," in *"Mitteleuropa" und "Südosteuropa" als Planungsraum: Wirtschafts- und kulturpolitische Expertisen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, ed. Carola Sachse (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 364; Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933–1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 23–24.

25. Much archival documentation on *Donauschwaben* and *Reich* activities in the Vojvodina immediately preceding and during World War II was erased, for instance, by bombardment and the conscious destruction of documentation by the crumbling National Socialist regime, as well as through the expulsion of ethnic Germans from the region and ensuing Partisan activities. Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten,* 49–59; Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation*, 19–22.

26. Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 21. This policy infamously included the "reclamation" of "German" territories—such as Pomerania, East Prussia, Silesia, or the Sudetenland—for the creation of "*Lebensraum*" in eastern Europe, as well as the mass deportation of Slavs and Jews, and the resettlement of Germans into these and other European territories (Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 143–44).

27. For more on the *Landdienst*, consider: Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 109, 141–45; Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 34–35. On the BDM experience abroad, see: Elizabeth Harvey, "'We Forgot All Jews and Poles': German Women and the 'Ethnic Struggle' in Nazi-Occupied Poland," *Contemporary European History* 10, no. 3, *Theme Issue: Gender and War in Europe c. 1918–1949* (November 2001): 447–61. As Rempel estimates, some 215,633 youths participated in the *Landdienst* and its subsidiary programs by 1944 (Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 136). This number was partially so large because participation in the *Landdienst* became compulsory for all German youths in 1942 (Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 35).

28. In relation to southeastern Europe in general, consider: Sachse, ed., *"Mitteleuropa" und "Südosteuropa"als Planungsraum*. On borderlands like the Batschka and the neighboring Banat specifically, see: Thomas Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division „Prinz Eugen". Die Banater Schwaben und die nationalsozialistischen Kriegsverbrechen*

(Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), 323–51; Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation*, 383–440.

29. Or, as Kater puts it: "plow in one hand and gun in the other" (Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 35).

30. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 34–35; Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East*, 50–57, 65–71.

31. Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 160.

32. Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt* (Leipzig: Koehler und Amelang, 1934), 154–56; Zsolt Vitári, *A Hitlerjugend és Délkelet-Európa* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2012), 452–54.

33. Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*, 157–58, 162.

34. Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 44–48.

35. Norbert Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938–1944 unter Horthy und Hitler* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 310.

36. Heinrich Ehrlich, "Das Vereinswesen in Kernei," *Kerneier Heimatblätter: Mitteilungen an Kerneier in aller Welt* 10, no. 1 (1967): 15; *Volksdeutscher Kalender 1943: Jahrbuch der deutschen Volksgruppe in Ungarn*, ed. Heinrich Reister (Budapest: Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn, Centrum-Verlag A.G., 1942), 64.

37. However, special "honors"—in the forms of ceremonies and certificates—would be given to those families who hosted KLV children and refused any form of compensation. AMV/KB 837 (letter, March 17, 1943. AMV denotes "Archive of the Museum of Vojvodina (Novi Sad)"; "KB" refers to the "Kulturbund" found therein.

38. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen*, 310; AMV/KB 599 (letter, August 3, 1942).

39. In terms of local KLV activities, such as cultural evenings and film screenings, consider: AMV/KB 247.

40. Vitári, *A Hitlerjugend és Délkelet-Európa*, 215–57.

41. The interaction between Germany and the Batschka's ethnic German organizations has been explored somewhat by Spannenberger, Bethke, and others. However, especially questions of youth mobilization and education within these interactions are severely understudied and form part of my ongoing dissertation, currently entitled "Contested Youths in Disputed Borderlands: The National Socialist Mobilization of Ethnic German Youths in the Batschka and the Western Banat, 1930s-1944."

42. AMV/KB 4 (letter, July 4, 1934); AMV/KB 14 (letter, August 22, 1934); AMV/KB 24 (letter, September 23, 1934); AMV/KB 1185 (letter, 1936).

43. For more on the pro-*Reich Erneuerer*'s take-over of the *Kulturbund*, see: Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten*, 559–68; Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation*, 59–65; Johann Böhm, *Die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Jugoslawien 1918–1941* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2009), 227–28, 277–82.

44. Following treaties between the Third Reich, the Soviet Union, and Romania, up to two hundred thousand ethnic Germans from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Dobrudja were "resettled" into the *Reich* during the summer, fall, and early winter of 1940. Since the "resettlement" route of these ethnic Germans led through Yugoslavia, large camps were established in Semlin/Zemun and Prahovo, where settlers were registered, fed, clothed, attended to

medically, and entertained with folkloric events. Up to seven thousand young men and boys and one thousand eight hundred girls (all ethnic Germans) volunteered a total of two million working hours during these months. *Schaffende Jugend: Monatsschrift der deutschen Jugend im Königreiche Jugoslawien*, vol. 2, no. 2, ed. Adam Maurus (Pančevo: Buchdruckerei "Typographia," Koch u. Merkle, 1939), 2; Heinrich Reister and Leopold Egger, *Das grosse Aufgebot* (Novi Sad: Druckerei- und Verlags-A.G., 1941).

45. For a history of Hungary's (and the Batschka's) German-language schools and their Nazi takeover, see: Wigant Weltzer, *Wege, Irrwege, Heimwege: Schulen—Erziehungsheime und Erziehungsanstalten des Volksbundes der Deutschen in Ungarn—1940–1944* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber: Schneider, 2005). For instructions for parents on the enrollment of their children, see: "Neuwerbass—Ein grosses Schülerlager," *Deutsches Volksblatt* 25, no. 7401 (November 23, 1943): 3; *Deutsches Volksblatt* 25, no. 7302 (July 25, 1943): 4.

46. *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, vol. 3, eds. Herbert Mars and Mathias Huber (Novi Sad: Landesjugendführung der DJ. Abteilung Presse und Propaganda. Deutsche Druckerei- u. Verlags-A.G., 1943), 154. These statistics were presented by the National Socialists themselves and are thus probably inflated; however, official membership statistics for the Batschka for the "adult" Nazi organization (the *Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn*, VDU) at that time were even higher, between 92 and 95 percent for most German villages, lending credibility to the fact that at least a majority of German youths in the region were mobilized in some form of Nazi organization. Consider: Johann Schmidt, "Vor 60 Jahren wurde der Schwäbisch-Deutsche Kulturbund (SDKB) gegründet," *Kerneier Heimatblätter* 24 (Easter 1981): 15.

47. According to *Kulturbund* estimates, by 1941, 96.5 percent of all Batschka Germans (calculated by households with *Kulturbund* membership cards) had joined the organization. However, this membership dropped considerably by 1942/1943, as it became apparent that membership would entail military service. Membership thereafter hovered closer to two-thirds of the Batschka's *Donauschwaben* population. Georg Wildmann, *Donauschwäbische Geschichte. Band III: Die Tragödie der Selbstbehauptung im Wirkfeld des Nationalismus der Nachfolgestaaten 1918–1944* (München: Donauschwäbische Kulturstiftung, 2010), 593–94; Schmidt, "Vor 60 Jahren," 15.

48. "Erster Landesjugendtag der deutschen Jugend in Ungarn," *Der Jungkamerad: Das Blatt der Volksdeutschen Jugend Ungarns* 1, no. 12 (July 1941): 1.

49. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1991), 176–88.

50. Passerini, *Memory and Utopia*, 1–4, 8–12. For Passerini, "subjectivity" is comprised primarily of the individual, as constituted and shaped in direct interaction, real or imagined, with other (interpersonal) subjectivities across time and space (2–3).

51. *Jung Roland*, ed. Robert Langer (Berlin: Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland, Verlag des VDU-Wirtschaftsunternehmens, GmbH, c. 1939), 26.

52. Johann Böhm, *Die deutschen Volksgruppen im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien und im serbischen Banat. Ihr Verhältnis zum Dritten Reich 1941–1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 277–78.

53. Edith Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit in der Batschka," part 3, *Kerneier Heimatblätter* 33 (1990): 16.

54. Johann Römer, "Ein Wiener Bub kinderlandverschickt in die Batschka," *Kerneier Heimatblätter* 46 (Easter 2003): 59–66.

55. Edith Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit in der Batschka," part 2, *Kerneier Heimatblätter* 32 (1989): 37–43.

56. Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit," part 2, 37–38.

57. Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit," part 2, 37–39; Edith Puchert-Krefft, "Kinderlandverschickung (KLV) vor 60 Jahren," *Kerneier Heimatblätter* 48 (2005): 103; Römer, "Ein Wiener Bub," 59–66.

58. Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit," part 2, 43. The extent to which these performances arose out of the KLV youths' initiative is debatable, especially as such events also appear in the archival record as planned and implemented "from above." See: AMV/KB 919 (*Volksbund* propaganda office report, June 30, 1943).

59. Riege, "Meine KLV-Zeit," part 2, 39–43. For an archival account of this silk worm production, see: AMV/KB 916 (letter, June 26, 1943).

60. Consider: "Deutsches Schulgebet," *Schaffende Jugend* 2, no. 9 (September 1939): 16.

61. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen*, 261–65.

62. "Germany, even far away from you, stars shine for us, the sun burns for us, the storm roars for us. And our life, and our ambitions, Germany, far from you, are for you evermore. You give us strength for our works, Germany, may your will be our commandment." *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Jugend in Ungarn 1943*, 59.

63. "Forget-me-nots with blue star; Quickly come hither, from near and afar; Do not forget, be thankful too; For all that Adolf Hitler has done for you." Johanna and Michael Bauer, interview, July 27, 2011.

64. Hans Brenner, interview, October 18, 2011; J. Bauer, Fischer, 2011, interviews.

65. Georg Schneider, interview, August 10, 2011.

66. Fischer, interview, 2011.

67. Brenner, interview.

68. J. Bauer, interview.

69. J. Bauer, interview.

70. J. Bauer, Schneider, interviews.

71. Schneider, interview.

72. Schneider, interview.

73. J. Bauer, interview.

74. *Schloss Belvedere* has a history related to the (musical) education of Hitler Youths. Reinhard Schau, *Das Weimarer Belvedere: Eine Bildungsstätte zwischen Goethezeit und Gegenwart* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 78–106.

75. Friedrich Fischer, interview, November 8, 2009; Fischer, interview, 2011.

76. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 184–86; Passerini, *Memory and Utopia*, 9; Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, 36–39.

77. For a discussion of historiographic conceptualizations of childhood and agency, consider: Nicholas Stargardt, "German Childhoods: The Making of a Historiography," *German*

History 16, no. 1 (1998): 1–15; Laura Lee Downs, "Enfance en guerre: Les évacuations d'enfants en France et en Grande-Bretagne (1939–1940)," *Annales HSS*, no. 2 (April-June 2011): 413–48.

78. Bethke, *Deutsche und ungarische Minderheiten*; Böhm, *Die deutschen Volksgruppen im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien und im serbischen Banat*; Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division „Prinz Eugen"*; Shimizu, *Die deutsche Okkupation*.

79. See endnote 25.

80. Zsolt Vitári, "VIII. Hitlerjugend és Magyarország a háború idején," *A Hitlerjugend külföldi kapcsolatai* (PhD dissertation, University of Pécs, 2008), 537–38. I would like to thank Bálint Tolmár for his assistance in translating these passages. For more on the relationship between the *levente* and the *Deutsche Jugend*, see: Zsolt Vitári, "Jugendbewegungen im Zeichen nationalpolitischer und paramilitärischer Ausrichtung im Vorkriegsungarn: Deutsche Jugend und Levente," *Suevia Pannonica* 35 (2007): 48–71.

81. AMV/KB 514 ("Rundschreiben," May 8, 1942).

82. "Dirty Swabians; you'll either become Hungarians or shit." AMV/KB 862 (report, April 5, 1943). I would like to thank Borbála Klacsmann for helping me translate these archival sources' Hungarian-language passages.

83. AMV/KB 780 (report, January 29, 1943).

84. The Piarists, or "Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools," are a Catholic order established in the seventeenth century specializing in the (generally free) education of children and youths.

85. Schneider, interview. There is no space in this article to discuss the very interesting, important, and underexplored history of the Holocaust in the Batschka. After April 1941, the Batschka's Jews became subjected to Hungary's anti-Semitic policies. In the spring of 1944, some eleven thousand Jews from the Batschka were deported to "mainland" Hungary and then Auschwitz (Jaša Romano and Lavoslav Kadelburg, "The Third Reich: Initiator, Organizer and Executant of Anti-Jewish Measures and Genocide in Yugoslavia," *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933–1945* [Belgrade: Kultura, 1977], 686–87). Reflections on these events vary enormously in oral history interviews, ranging from outright denial that a Jewish population was ever present in certain towns, to brief mentionings of the deportation of the local Jewish communities, to detailed and fraught accounts of the tragic fate of Jewish neighbors, classmates, and friends.

86. Schneider, interview.

87. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen*, 283–86; G. C. Paikert, *The Danube Swabians* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 147. "Prewar Hungary" refers to Hungary as its borders were drawn after the 1920 Trianon Treaty.

88. These agreements settled the relationship between the Hungarian and German military, set "quotas" for *Wehrmacht* and SS recruitment within Hungary, and clarified issues like the citizenship of ethnic Germans who served in *Reich* forces. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries*, 224–25; Paikert, *The Danube Swabians*, 146; Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 66.

89. Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 66. See also: Josip Mirnić, "The Enlistment of Volksdeutschers from the Bačka Region in the Waffen SS," *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933–1945* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1977), 623–53.

90. "Zur Armee der 20.000 Batschkadeutschen," *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südungarns* 25, no. 7348 (September 19, 1943): 1. For more on the Prinz-Eugen Division, consider: Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division „Prinz Eugen."*

91. *Volksdeutscher Kalender 1943*, 84–85.

92. "Hitlerjugend berichtet: Kriegsfreiwillige der Hitlerjugend—Ihr erster Sturm," *Deutsche Nachrichten: Mitteilungsblatt der Reichsdeutschen in Ungarn* 9, no. 9 (March 3, 1944): 8.

93. *Volksdeutscher Kalender 1943*, 85.

94. Consider: *Deutsches Volksblatt: Tageszeitung der Deutschen Südungarns* (Novi Sad) 25, no. 7302 (July 25, 1943): 4; vol. 26, no. 7560 (June 9, 1944): 12.

95. Letters dated December 10, 1943, and February 18, 1944, Historical Archive of Zrenjanin (IAZ), Fond 131, Box 1, "Deutsche Volksgruppe in Banat und Serbien, 1941–1944," no signatura.

96. Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division „Prinz Eugen*," 293–301; Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 135–46, 174–286.

97. Fischer, J. and M. Bauer, Schneider, interviews.